

grassroots

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September 2002

Message from the new GSSA President



KLAUS KELLNER
NEW GSSA PRESIDENT

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Dear friends and colleagues.

The year is steaming ahead and when you receive the second edition of our new GSSA newsletter, *Grassroots*, we will already be in the last quarter of the year. Once again, a word of thanks to the organizing committee for a job well done of the very successful, first joint congress by the Grassland Society of Southern Africa (GSSA) and the South African Society of Animal Science (SASAS), which was held at Christiana Aventura, 13-16 May 2002. For those who could not be there, maybe next time. I will assure you, it will then be even better and bigger! I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Dave Goodenough, GSSA past president, for his leadership and all the inputs, not only on Council, but for the GSSA as a whole. He has lead the GSSA ship very steady and calmly through often, very stormy waters. Thanks to all the Council members who have decided to rest for a while. Hope we can draw from your expertise again in future. Welcome and congratulations to all new Council members and especially the regional representatives who have agreed to help us make the GSSA one of the best associations in Southern Africa. With this new structure we would like to take up the challenge mentioned by Dave in his presidential address, by making the GSSA more attractive and useful, especially to our land users at grassroots level.

The collaboration of all the land users, have become more and more important for us, and it will therefore be the responsibility of every range and forage scientist, including extension workers and other practitioners, to start communicating with the farming community and get everybody actively involved in the work that we are doing. There are only very few range and forage scientists left, so why do we not put all the differences from the past behind us, take hands and work towards a better future for the GSSA in South Africa. If we do not stand together and make our voice heard, the GSSA will not survive and continue with the good reputation it had for many years. Let us take on the challenges and opportunities that are presented to us in our field of expertise and reverse phrases such as "what is the GSSA doing for me", to rather, "what can I do" or "how can I serve the GSSA". After all it is our society and we all have to make it work! When last have you offered to help organize a farmers day in your region or presented your research results and work at such a forum? When last have you collaborated with fellow scientists and exchanged ideas, except at a congress, of how to increase your impact in the range and forage arena, be it on the policy, development or research side? Too many long term and very dedicated scientists have left the discipline and too many have even resigned as members from the GSSA. The question can be asked - why? Have you lately spoken to one of our past or maybe "confused" members and asked them to re-think their position and rather get actively involved in the GSSA again? It is very sad to see members who have build this Society to what it is today, make negative comments and leave the GSSA. The younger generation, especially students look up to the "guru's" of range and forage science. For them it is a wonderful to see, communicate and collaborate with these well known scientists, especially at conferences, farmer's days or workshops. It is therefore important that the "gurus" of range- and forage science are seen at such meetings. Let us rather be "jumpers" and not "splitters" as the taxonomists would say!! Luckily there are also those members who have given their support to the GSSA all these years and are still actively involved. Thanks to all of you, we really appreciate your inputs and support.

By now most of the problems with regard to the administration have been sorted out and with our newsletter, we hope that the communication in the GSSA will be more efficient. Please send your contributions and make contact with your regional representative in Southern Africa. We now look forward to the VIIIth International Rangeland Congress which is to be held in Durban from 26 July to 1 August 2003. We wish Tony Palmer and his team all the best with this very big task.

To all you "grass rooters" out there, let us become actively involved in the GSSA and its initiatives. See what difference you can make in the year to come with regard to range and forage science in Southern Africa and across the borders. Let us make our motto for the next season "*think positive and act by networking*".

If you would like to communicate with me, please do so at :
plbkk@puknet.puk.ac.za (or) erestore@intekom.co.za.

I look forward hearing from you

Keep well
All the best
Klaus Kellner
PRESIDENT

SUCCESSFUL PASTURE EXPO HELD AT CEDARA

A Pasture Expo was held at Cedara Research Station on 23 and 24 July 2004. The GSSA and the KZN Branch of SASAS hosted the event in collaboration with the ARC - Range & Forage Institute's Cedara Centre and the KZN Department of Agriculture & Environmental Affairs.

The aim of the Expo was to provide farmers and advisors with the latest technology on pasture selection, management and utilisation by livestock. Some twenty pasture and livestock specialists from the ARC-RFI, KZNDA&EA and the University of Natal presented research findings on posters at regular intervals on both days. Farmers were provided with a programme of talks and were able to select those topics that were of most interest to them. In addition, agribusiness associated with pasture

and livestock management were invited to set up displays of their products and services to initiate discussion with farmers.

Approximately 150 farmers and advisors attended the two days, and favourable feedback was received from both the delegates and exhibitors. Extra copies of the summaries of the talks presented on the day are available (see www.mindmap.co.za for more details). The local branches of the GSSA and SASAS in KwaZulu-Natal have combined forces to provide farmers with available technology around pasture, veld and livestock management on a regular basis.

Richard Hurt
ARC - Range & Forage Institute, Cedara Centre



Left:
Exhibitions of pasture-related equipment and implements at the Pasture Expo at Cedara, KwaZulu-Natal



Right:
Sigrun Kassier (ARC-RFI, Cedara Centre) talks on yield and utilization differences of forage cereal types



Left:
Dave Goodenough (ARC-RFI, Cedara Centre) explains seasonal yield differences of some Italian and Westerwolds ryegrasses



Above
Richard Reynolds (KZN Department of Agriculture & Environmental Affairs) convinces farmers that it is essential to measure pasture production

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Lowveld Co-ordinated Research Forum (LOCORES)

Members of the GSSA are involved in providing an interface between managers and researchers on ecological matters in the eastern Lowveld of Mpumalanga and the Limpopo Province to the east of the escarpment. The vehicle for these interactions, the Lowveld Co-ordinated Research Forum or LOCORES as it has become known, was established in 1992. LOCORES is an informal body that has maintained its autonomy by remaining apart from any existing national or regional committees. The forum does however contribute to formal structures by virtue of its diverse membership.

LOCORES bases its existence on the following “Strategy for Sustainable Living” principles:

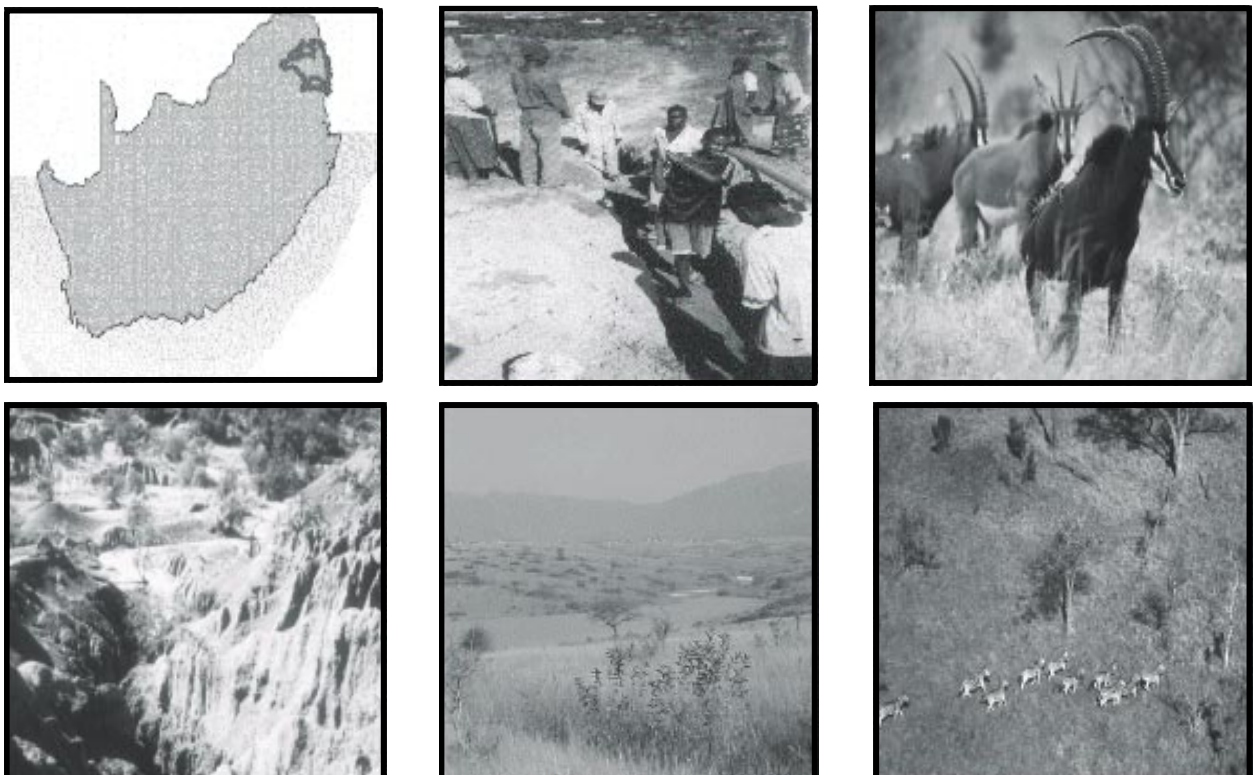
1. Conserving the life-support systems that nature provides (preparing for climate change, adopting an integrated approach to land and water management and to maintain as much as possible of natural and modified ecosystems);
2. Conserving the diversity of ecosystems (complete and maintain a system of protected areas, improve the conservation of natural resources and improve the knowledge and understanding of species and ecosystems); and
3. Ensuring sustainable use of renewable resources (harvest wild resources sustainably and support management of wild renewable resources by local communities).

Based on the above, LOCORES has the following aims:

1. To promote the interaction between applied ecologists, currently working in the field, and natural resource managers who are open-minded and pro-active; and
2. Towards co-ordinated and client orientated research aimed at conserving the structure, functions and diversity of the natural systems of the Eastern Lowveld.

LOCORES field day slots are put up for grabs at the annual general meeting that is held in November or December each year. Two “manager” and two “scientists” are elected to ensure that the field days have a good management/science balance. The members decide upon topics and each “proposer” is charged with the organisation of the day. The list of members, updated by the ARC-Range and Forage Institute in Nelspruit, is then emailed to the responsible person who organizes a date, venue, time, speakers, and contacts all members. Post field day activities normally take the form of a bring-and-braai. It has become customary/necessary/advisable to overnight close to the venue because as with all good GSSA type field days serious discussions are generally better facilitated by “a few cold ones” and a braai. Following the field day, new names are added to the list and the cycle continues (we currently circulate to about 80 people but have had up to 110 people at field days). This system has functioned informally and with great success for the past ten years.

Figure 1 illustrates some of the issues under discussion at LOCORES meetings. *Clockwise from top left:– The current area of interest, community issues, rare species breeding, erosion causes and management, communal rangeland management, game count techniques.*



NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

Forthcoming events in KwaZulu-Natal

Prestige Dairy Symposium - Silage Production

Jointly hosted by the GSSA and the KZN Branch of SASAS.

Date:	End of February 2003 (date to be advised)
Time:	09h00 - 15h00
Venue:	Auditorium, Cedara Research Station, near Pietermaritzburg, KZN
Cost:	R150 includes copy of the Proceedings, teas, lunch, snacks and refreshments after the event
Details:	Phone Dave on (031) 266-1344 or visit www.mindmap.co.za

7th Hlabisa Beef and Game Symposium

It is anticipated that this symposium will be held in Zululand later this year. The Hlabisa Beef and Game Symposiums were highly successful and informative events, and the last was held in 1991. Make sure that you do not miss this meeting. The tentative programme will cover problem plant management strategies (bush encroachment and alien vegetation), health and management of cattle and game, and game-ranch related ecotourism. For more details phone Dave on (031) 266-1344 or visit www.mindmap.co.za

Land Care in the North West Province

The vision of the National Department of Agriculture with regard to LandCare is to *raise the long-term productivity and ecological sustainability of our land resources and thereby ensure a future for our land resources within the agricultural sector*. A raise in productivity as well as ecological sustainability is being severely hampered in the North West Province because of rangeland degradation and bush encroachment. In many cases these problems can be attributed to a lack of knowledge – in many cases the inhabitants do not even see it as a problem.

The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment as well as the School of Environmental Sciences of the Potchefstroom University for CHE (Prof. Klaus Kellner in particular) are actively involved in combating degradation in the Province by means of the LandCare pro-



gramme. Various bush control as well as rangeland management projects are ongoing in the Province. Students of the University are actively involved in a monitoring project where the success of the LandCare practises is evaluated.

Various provincial as well as regional awareness campaigns were launched from 2001. Approximately 600 people have already been reached by these campaigns. LandCare forums have been established in certain regions and are functioning successfully at this stage.

The LandCare awareness campaigns as well as the LandCare forums will also be used in future to introduce and promote the activities of the GSSA, especially because the participants to the LandCare programme are concerned with degradation as well as the sustainability of our resources.

Western Cape News

Die Jaarlikse Outeniqua-weidingskursus word hierdie jaar weer te Outeniqua proefplaas by George gehou op 1 en 2 Oktober. Weens groot belangstelling word dit oorweeg om 'n tweede kursus aan te bied om al die belangstellendes te akkommodeer. Die lesings word aangebied deur navorsings- en voorligtingspersoneel van Wes-Kaap Landbou en die organiseerder van die kursus is Philip Botha van Outeniqua.

Die volgende onderwerpe word aangespreek:

- Grondkeuse & grondvrugbaarheid
- Groeiwyse van raaigrasse, meerjarige wit- en rooiklawer, lusern en kikoejoe
- Kultivarkeuse
- Effek van fosfaatbemesting op die opbrengs en kwaliteit van kikoejoe, maarjarige raaigras en klawer
- Die volhoubaarheid van klawers in 'n gras-klawerweiding
- Weidingskwaliteit en melkproduksie
- Bestuur en melkproduksiepotensiaal van oorgesaaide kikoejoeweiding
- Demonstrasies en prakties: saadbehandeling, neem van grondmonsters, besoek proewe en melkstal.
- Inkuiling van gewasse
- Rol van weidingsgewasse in 'n voervloeistelsel
- Voervloei: ekonomiese beginsels
- Winsgewendheid van diereproduksie op weiding
- Besproeiingstelsels en –bestuur
- Paneelbespreking
- Demonstrasie van implimente

Great news for agriculture in the Western Cape province is that, as of August 1st, Agriculture is a provincial department on its own. Previously it was merely a Chief Directorate and shared a department with Economic affairs and Tourism.

Dr. Johann van Heerden van die LNR: VWI op Stellenbosch is betrokke by die LNR se Peulgewasseprogram en het in Augustus saam met Hannes Botha van die Worcester Veldreservaat (Wes-Kaap Landbou) saam met Australiese en Suid Amerikaanse navorsers deur die Wes-Kaap gereis om inheemse peulgewasse in die semi-ariëde natuurlike veld te versamel. Dertig opnamepunte is binne 'n week besoek en minstens 6-8 van die spesies wat gevind is, het groot potensiaal om 'n belangrike bydrae te lewer in ons landbouproduksiestelsels.

Dr. Mark Hardy of Agriculture Western Cape has expanded his evaluation of production dynamics of crop and crop/pasture rotation systems in the Swartland, to the Southern Cape, with long rotation systems on two privately owned farms in Swellendam and Riversdal, including Lucerne as the pasture. A short rotation system trial was initiated on Tygerhoek research farm near Riviersonderend, with a pasture mixture containing medics and subterranean clover. Within these system trials, various researchers from the ARC, Agriculture Western Cape, as well as research personnel and students from universities, have the opportunity to investigate specific aspects regarding the production dynamics.

Limpopo Province News

Tawoomba Agricultural Development Centre:

In May 2002 a course on veld condition assessment was offered to fourth year veterinary students. A short course on general veld management practices was offered to animal health technicians in June 2002.

A farmer's day, targeting upcoming farmers, is planned for the 11th of September 2002. On this day general veld management principles and practices will be discussed.

Mara Agricultural Development Centre:

A three-day course on game ranch management was offered to members of three local communities in July 2002. The course was facilitated by the Nkuzi Development Association and held at the facilities of the former Ben Lavin Nature Reserve.

Messina Game Association and Limpopo Province Department of Agriculture:

A farmer's day on game ranching is planned for the 25th of October 2002 at Messina. The provisional program includes topics such as the genetic management of game populations, predator control and management and the value of *Colophospermum mopane* on game ranches in the Mopani Veld.

Limpopo Province Botanical Society

This society, in essence a branch of the Botanical Society of South Africa, was recently founded and mainly aims to promote the conservation and appreciation of indigenous flora in the Limpopo province. A project to promote the afro-montane grassland is on its way.

Mpumalanga News:

The Range & Forage Section of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Environment, Mpumalanga in conjunction with Dave Goodenough (GSSA) from Cedara are planning a pasture tour in Mpumalanga from the 10th (travel day) to the 14th of November 2002. We plan to visit farms in the Ermelo, Lydenburg and Barberton areas of Mpumalanga. Farms where Ryegrass, Fescue, *Eragrostis curvula*, *Digitaria eriantha*, *Sericea lespedeza* and Babala are incorporated in farming systems will be visited.

More detailed information will be made available as soon as possible.

Contact Anneke Engelbrecht at : anneke@laeveld1.agric.za

Gauteng News : August 2002

A. Dinokeng

The Gauteng Provincial Government has embarked on an ambitious programme to develop a premier tourist destination in the northeastern quadrant of the province in the next three years. Dinokeng is well suited to developments such as game reserves, lodges, conference centres and nature-based tourism activities. The development of the area as a tourism destination will provide a boost to the economy of the region. The Department of Agriculture, Conservation, Environment and Land Affairs (DACEL) are facilitating the Dinokeng programme at an initial cost of R140-million over the next three years. DACEL is working closely with the Metsweding District Municipality and its two local councils, Nokeng tsa Taemane and Kungwini, as well as other local stakeholders to develop a highly integrated approach to the development of the area. www.dacel.gpg.gov.za/projects/dinokeng/

B. World Summit on Sustainable Development : Johannesburg, 26 August to 4 September

- **Science comes to the World Summit : Jonews Reporter, August 22, 2002**

The World Summit on Sustainable Development is rapidly emerging as a hot spot for convergence by science and technology experts from around the world, with dedicated science forum events running parallel to the Summit from 26 August to 4 September. The Forum takes place at the Ubuntu Village in Johannesburg, and attendance is free. The objective of the event is to provide a platform for dialogue among top scientists from around the world to highlight the critical contributions of science, technology and innovation to sustainable development. In addition, a Pretoria leg of the Science Forum is being planned as "Science at the Summit" set to take place from 26 to 30 August at the CSIR Conference Centre. A South Africa/European Commission-led event where the issues of science, technology and innovation for sustainable development will be debated, will take place on 2 and 3 September at the Ubuntu Village at the Wanderers in Illovo. http://www.goafrica.co.za/joburg/ aug_2002/science.stm.

- **Listed as two of the eight Southern Africa enterprises being showcased by the WSSD:**

Marula oil and fruit pulp manufactured by Marula Natural Products (Pty) Ltd

Podi-Boswa (Pty) Ltd, where the company produces goat meat, milk and skin

<http://www.joburgsummit.com/SUCCESSSTORIES/fullstory.sps?iNewsid=20708&itype=1650>

- **Agricultural subsidies in spotlight**

The massive farm subsidies to European and American farmers were discussed. More than \$300-billion was spent on agricultural subsidies in high-income countries in 2001, roughly equivalent to the combined domestic product of all sub-Saharan Africa <http://www.joburgsummit.com/news/fullstory.sps?iNewsid=20726&itype=1687>

Combined GSSA / SASAS Congress 2002

This year's annual GSSA congress was held in conjunction with the South African Society for Animal Science (SASAS) at Aventura Christiana. About 350 delegates attended what proved to be a very good congress. There was a full academic programme, and, it goes without saying at a GSSA congress, a very good social programme as well.

Congratulations are in order for Annelie de Beer and her team for the excellent job they did of organising this joint congress.

The AGM was of the opinion that the joint congress was a success and that we look to again joining with SASAS for the 2004 congress.



*Left:
Outgoing president
Dave Goodenough
hands out the awards
at the congress dinner*



*Right:
Richard Reynolds was the "winner" of the "coveted"
faux pas award, beating several illustrious co-nominees
(Rich Hurt & Kevin Kirkman among them).*



*Left:
Outgoing president Dave Goodenough handing over to the new
GSSA president Prof. Klaus Kellner*



*Right:
Prof Pete Zacharias (left) chaired the session in which
Dr Prisca Mugabe (Zimbabwe), Jaques Els (Namibia),
Richard Hurt (South Africa), Axel Rothague (Namibia)
and Dr Inacio Maposse (Mozambique) addressed the
congress on the current state of the discipline in
southern Africa.*



*Left:
Annelie de Beer was elected
vice-president of the GSSA.*



*Right:
Annelie de Beer handing over
the GSSA's Peter Edward's
trophy to the best emerging
farmer in the North West
Province, Mr Ponki Makenita.*

Below: Various congress delegates at the final congress dinner.



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